



**Housing Committee Public Hearing  
February 3, 2015**

**OPPOSE**

- **SB 170 - AN ACT PROTECTING HOUSING FOR SENIOR CITIZENS**
- **SB 409 - AN ACT EXPANDING AGE-RESTRICTED HOUSING OPTIONS FOR ELDERLY PERSONS**
- **HB 5583 - AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING FOR ELDERLY PERSONS**
- **HB 6144 – AN ACT CONCERNING AGE-RESTRICTED HOUSING OPTIONS FOR ELDERLY PERSONS**

Testimony of Betsy Crum, Executive Director

Senator Winfield, Representative Butler, and members of the Housing Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Betsy Crum, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Housing Coalition. The Connecticut Housing Coalition represents the broad, vibrant network of community-based affordable housing activity across the state. Our more than 250 member organizations include nonprofit developers, human service agencies, resident associations, and diverse other housing practitioners and advocates. Founded in 1981, the Coalition works to expand housing opportunity and to increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing in Connecticut.

I would like to speak to you today in opposition to four bills that have been raised to exclude or limit the rights of people with disabilities to live in state housing. These are SB 170, SB 409, HB 5583, and HB 6144. These bills, together and individually, would alter the decades-long practice of making senior/disabled housing units available to both seniors and people with disabilities. The bills are specifically designed to limit access to affordable housing by one type of population – people with disabilities – in favor of another type – senior citizens. Both populations need and deserve access to our affordable housing stock, and I would urge rejection of any legislation designed to establish quotas or prohibitions based on disability.

In 1999 the Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.* affirmed that the unjustified segregation of individuals with disabilities is an illegal form of discrimination. Since then we have worked to desegregate living areas and increase the integrated housing opportunities for individuals with disabilities. People with disabilities may have multiple physical, mental, and/or developmental conditions that constrain their possibility of obtaining suitable housing. For example, a person with mobility impairments may require a single level

home, special equipment to aid them in carrying out daily functions, or even a regular home nurse or family member to care for them. These needs, in turn, require different housing solutions, such as greater accessibility or multiple bedrooms for live-in assistance.

In Connecticut, income and employment status also correlates with disability status. Unemployment and poverty are significantly more prevalent among people with disabilities. Some 41% of the population with disabilities has an income below 200% of the poverty threshold, creating some of the most acute need for affordable housing among any population. In contrast, only about 16% of elderly households are classified as extremely low income.

People with disabilities have the same housing needs as anyone in our state. They need a stable home and need to be part of a community. They want a place to sit down for their daily meals, talk over the events of the day with their friends and family, and have a safe, affordable place to sleep at night. They do not need to have their options limited; instead, in the spirit of the Olmstead decision, they seek more viable, service-enriched options in communities with a diversity of people.

I would respectfully ask that you consider rejecting any legislation that singles out one type of citizen for exclusion or limitation from the housing options that are currently available to them. Thank you for your consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions.